Moscow State University

Department of Linguistics and Information Technologies

Education in USA and in Russia:

advantages and disadvantages,

personal view



1 | Theoretical and pragmatic bases of teaching foreign languages: modern approaches

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Checked by: Alla Leonidovna Nazarenko

Made by: Olga Ivolina

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Introduction.

It is well known that the education system in the United States is one of the best in the world. That is why young people from different countries including Russia are striving to study at American universities, which occupy the leading places in the ranking of the best universities in the world.   
At the same time, we know that our engineers, mathematicians, and programmers are highly valued in the American and other countries of the world, for example, Australia. Probably, despite the ratings, our education system in some areas has succeeded.

Trying to solve the problems existing in the Russian education system, many specialists try to apply the positive experience of other countries. But before introducing any innovation into our kindergartens, schools and universities, it is worth to carefully read and analyze all its pros and cons. So, let's consider the peculiarities of the US education system and compare it with the one that exists in our country



Education system in both countries is divided formally into such stages as preschool or kindergarten, primary school, secondary school and then college, university, or apprenticeship

Pre-school or Kindergarten

USA

The term “Kindergarten” is borrowed directly from the German but given an American meaning. Kindergarten in USA is the first time that children go to school. While many children may have attended a preschool, even an academic preschool, Kindergarten is considered the beginning of formal education. The government funds kindergarten, half day or full day programs. Attendance is not compulsory. However, every five-year-old attends. To be eligible, usually a student must be five years old by September 1. Sometimes the cut-off date is December 31.

Best Kindergarten schools in USA are usually part of larger, well-respected elementary school. This may be a private or public school. In either case, Kindergarten in USA will tend to have two purposes: preparing children for the classroom experience and getting them ready academically to manage the grade one curriculum. Emphasis is on “readiness”. This means the “prerequisites” that children must come to school knowing so that they are prepared for success in formal school. These prerequisites include basic number sense, counting to 10, knowing colors, identifying geometric shapes, knowing some letter sounds, identifying letters and even understanding that reading is from left to right. There is some feeling that Kindergarten has become too academic. Should children be reading by age five? As scholastic requirements in high school have become more demanding, Kindergarten must necessarily become a more serious enterprise if a student is to have sufficient time to prepare for academic success, 12 years later.

Kindergarten in USA tends to be teacher-lead and developmentally appropriate. For example, while the activities and lessons planned for the day will be designed to complement what we know about five-year-old learners, children will be expected to do everything at the same time. So there will be song time, and story time and calendar time, counting time and snack time. Classrooms tend to be quite colorful and hanging full of student artwork, illustrations, numbers and words of interest. Ample time is spent on socialization: sharing, taking turns, resolving conflict and resecting other’s possessions. While there are best Kindergartens in the USA to be found among Montessori, Waldorf, Reggio Emilia and Forest programs, traditional Kindergarten in USA delivers an academic curriculum in a pleasant environment.

Ideal student to teacher ratio of 18:1 – teacher assistants can help to achieve this ratio.

Parents are treated as full participants in their child’s education and are encouraged to be involved.

High quality teaching is paramount. Teachers should have early-childhood credentials.

There is a thoughtful curriculum. At some forward-thinking schools, five-year-old are keeping journals and using picture graphs to record data.

There is a plan in place when a student does not master the material.

The students demonstrate their joy in learning. The students look happy, are smiling and at ease

Russia

Preschool options in Moscow include both local Russian schools and international alternatives.

The influx of expats has inspired an expansion of the preschool services offered, so there are many options for expats looking for preschools in Russia.

The Russian schooling system begins at the age of six when children attend primary school, but many parents choose to send their youngsters to preschools, nurseries or kindergartens to prepare them for the education system.

Preschools in Moscow tend to accept children from the age of two and a half and some nurseries and kindergartens from a younger age – around 18 months old. There are many Russian municipal preschools in Moscow but are traditionally heavily oversubscribed. As a result there are now many private international preschools, a popular option for expats.

Most preschools in Moscow are open from 8.30am until 5.00pm or 6.00pm. In addition, some will offer a late pick-up service up to 7.00pm to help accommodate the needs of working parents.

Teaching is predominantly typically include counting, words, drawing, painting, music and other educational tasks aimed at preparing the children for the beginning of their formal schooling.

In state gardens, parents pay only for children's meals, which is about 4000 rubles a month. With this money the child is fed 5 times a day, including hot meals and fruits with vegetables

While in the American garden parents pay separately for the child's stay and meals separately. The cost varies from $ 300 to $ 1,500 a month, depending on the state



Schools.

USA

The elementary school curriculum varies with the organisation and educational aims of individual schools and local communities. Promotion from one grade to the next is based on a student’s achievement of specified skills, although a child is required to repeat a year in exceptional circumstances only. (Some school districts are returning to testing as a means of determining when a child is ready to move to the next grade, in an effort to reduce reliance on ‘social promotion,’ and this is becoming yet another contentious issue.)

Elementary schools provide instruction in the fundamental skills of reading, writing and maths, as well as history and geography (taught together as social studies), crafts, music, science, art and physical education (phys ed) or gym. Foreign languages, which used to be taught at high schools only, are now being introduced during the last few years of elementary school in some areas (although in some cities, state schools don’t offer any foreign language teaching). Elementary students are usually given regular homework, although in many schools few children complete it.

Secondary school

In some districts, students attend a combined junior/senior high school or attend a middle school until 13 (grade 8) before transferring to a four-year senior high school. Like elementary education, secondary education is co-educational. American high schools are often much larger than secondary schools in other countries, and regional high schools with over 2,000 students are common in some rural areas and city suburbs.

Secondary school students must take certain ‘core’ curriculum courses for a prescribed number of years or terms, as determined by each state. These generally include English, maths, general science, health, physical education and social studies or social sciences (which may include American history and government, geography, world history and social problems). Students are streamed (tracked) in some high schools for academic subjects, where the brightest students are put on a ‘fast track’.

In addition to mandatory subjects, students choose ‘electives’ (optional subjects), which supplement their future education and career plans. Electives usually comprise around half of a student’s work in grades 9 to 12. Students concentrate on four subjects each quarter and are seldom ‘pushed’ beyond their capability or capacity for learning.

Educational standards in the US

High schools offer a wide range of subjects from which students can choose a programme leading to college/university entrance or a career in business or industry. The courses offered vary from school to school and are listed in school curriculum guides. Around the ninth grade, students receive counselling as they begin to plan their careers and select subjects that are useful in their chosen fields. Counselling continues throughout the senior high school years and into college, particularly in junior college or the first two years of a four-year college programme.

Larger schools may offer a selection of elective courses aimed at three or more tracks: academic, vocational and general. Students planning to go on to college or university elect courses with an emphasis on academic sciences (biology, chemistry, physics), higher mathematics (algebra, geometry, trigonometry and calculus), advanced English literature, composition, social sciences and foreign languages.

The vocational programme may provide training in four fields: agricultural education, which prepares students for farm management and operation; business education, which trains students for the commercial field; home economics, which prepares students for home management, child care and care of the sick; and trade and industrial education, which provides training for jobs in mechanical, manufacturing, building and other trades. Students interested in entering business from high school may take typing, shorthand, book-keeping or ‘business’ English.

The third program is a general or comprehensive program providing features of the academic and vocational programs. Its introductory courses provide an appreciation of the various trades and industrial arts, rather than training students for specific jobs. Those who don’t want to go to college or enter a particular trade immediately but want the benefits of schooling and a high school diploma often follow the general program.

Upon satisfactory completion of 12th grade, a student graduates and receives a high school diploma. (In the US, students graduate from high school, junior high school, elementary school and even nursery school.) At high schools (as at colleges and universities) there are ceremonies to celebrate graduation complete with caps, gowns, diplomas, and speeches by staff and students.

Graduation ceremonies are often called ‘commencement’, because it marks the start of a new stage in a student’s life. Americans are enthusiastic about ‘life cycle events’ (milestones) and graduations are a time of great celebration and feting of students. It’s a particular honour for a student (usually the top student) to be chosen as the ‘valedictorian’, who gives the valedictorian oration or farewell speech at the graduation ceremony.

Importance of Hobbies and Sports in High School

With the exception of physical education (phys ed) classes, school sport is usually extra-curricular, i.e. takes place outside school hours. Team sports have a high profile at many high schools and being ‘on the school team’ is more important to many students than being top of the class. (Actually, in terms of securing scholarships for university, they may be right!) Students who excel at sports are often referred to disparagingly as ‘jocks’, implying that they’re too stupid or lazy to succeed at their academic work.

Although the jock stereotype doesn’t always ring true, sports stars do tend to neglect their school work. This has led some schools to introduce ‘no pass/no play’ rules, where only students who pass their courses may participate in after-school sports. High school sport is central to school activities and the ceremony that goes with college sport is also found at high school level.

In addition to sports, many other school-sponsored activities take place outside school hours, including science and nature clubs, musical organisations (e.g. band and choir), art and drama groups, and language clubs. Nearly every school has a student-run newspaper and a photographic darkroom is also usually available.

Colleges and universities place considerable value in the achievements of students in high school extra-curricular activities, as do employers. High schools are also important social centres, and participation in school-organised social events such as homecoming parades (with homecoming queens) and school dances is widespread.

Russia

Education in Russia is organised and coordinated by the state, which ensures that general education is free and available for everyone. Most schools are state schools but private schools have also been established in recent years.

General education in Russia comprises three stages: primary education, which lasts for four years; basic general education lasting for five years and secondary education which lasts for two to three years.

Russian general education is aimed at the intellectual, emotional, moral and physical development of the individual. It aims to develop the abilities that will allow a student to adapt to life in society as well as helping individuals to make conscious choices concerning professional education.

General education normally consists of 34 weeks of study per year and 27 to 36 hours of study per week. The academic year typically runs from 1 September to the beginning of June. School examinations are in June.

General education is compulsory. The basic curriculum for has some compulsory fields of study such as the Russian language, foreign languages, mathematics, history, politics, natural sciences etc. Every school designs its own curriculum, which is based on state requirements, and there can be some extra or optional disciplines. In Moscow, there are also schools that specialise in certain subjects, such as maths, music, arts, and sports. These schools can also offer extra education for children, alongside the general courses.

After completing primary and basic general education, the students participate in final examinations. They are awarded a Certificate of Basic General Education, which entitles the student to be admitted to either secondary general education, to vocational education or to non-university level higher education.

After completing the secondary general education, the students need to pass the State final attestation (unified state exam), after which they will be awarded a Certificate of Secondary General Education. This school leaving certificate will allow students to continue to higher education: either vocational education or both non-university and university level education.

Recently, new types of secondary schools have emerged called gymnasium and lyceum, which can be both state owned or private. The duration of studies can exceed that of secondary general schools, and the educational programs can be more advanced.

In total, general education takes 11 years to complete. Children are enrolled in schools at the age of six and normally they finish school by the age of 17.



High education

USA

All higher education institutions in the education system can be divided into colleges and universities.

Colleges are separate faculties of US universities that train professionals in a narrow field of knowledge, as well as higher education institutions with a 2-year and 4-year training program. Thus, in the US universities are extensive associations of colleges, schools, and research centers.

Local, technical colleges and primary education colleges offer technical training, short-term technical upgrading programs designed for training for several weeks or months.

Two-year colleges offer an extensive selection of programs that are usually a year or more away from production.

Typically, colleges offer a four-year training program, which allows you to get a bachelor's degree.

It is also interesting that in higher education institutions, the United States combines correspondence, evening and full-time education. This type of education prefers working youth. Such students can learn even during weekends and vacations.

Training in English universities is conducted on three basic levels. The first four years of higher education in the US is the first level of education. A student who has completed a four-year program at a college or university with an awarded bachelor's degree. In America, a college is called an institution that awards only a bachelor's degree (possibly a master's degree), or the first stage of training at the university for a period of 4 years, although some universities shorten this term. The first two years students study general subjects: humanitarian disciplines, mathematics, natural sciences, computer science, languages. At the end of the second year of study, students choose subjects for more in-depth study.

Training at the second level is carried out under a special program, focused on practical activities in various fields. Students who already have a bachelor's degree must study two more years to obtain a master's degree. To obtain a master's degree, a student must write and defend a thesis.

The highest level of education in the United States is a doctoral program, which presupposes specialized training and independent scientific activity.

American students do not spend time and energy on subjects that are never suitable for them in their profession. They for the entire period of study receive a narrow specialization, studying those subjects that will be useful for them in the future. In schools in Russia, on the contrary, did not get in the choice of subjects. Therefore, it is believed that American students are better prepared for independent life.

Russia

What about Moscow, you'll find a wide range of education with over 40 universities in Moscow. The capital of Russia is home to top universities such as the Lomonosov Moscow State University and The Moscow State Institute of International Relations.

In Russia, a student is allowed to apply to only one institution at a time. Applicants are expected to have an educational level equivalent to the complete secondary education in Russia. Applications must be submitted by 15 May of the year in which the applicants wish to begin their studies. The academic year lasts ten months, from 1 September to 23 June and it is divided into 2 semesters.

The admission to higher education establishments is competitive. The procedure is based on entrance examinations, certificates, as well as interviews. Admission depends on the marks obtained in the examinations as well as on the number of places available. The decision might also depend on the certificate from the previous educational institute if there are identical examination results for multiple candidates.

It is also possible to apply as a fee-paying student. There is not as much competition for these places; therefore the admission requirements may be lower. Tuition fees usually will exceed USD 300 per month, although they vary from one institution to another.

Students are usually required to attend a preparatory course which involves studying relevant academic subjects. This is a prerequisite for admission to study places which are free of charge. Students paying tuition fees are required only to pass some tests to qualify for admission.

A student can choose between university level and non-university level of education.

Degrees & diplomas offered at university level:

* Intermediate diploma (at least two years)
* Bakalavr diploma (at least four years)
* Specialist diploma (five to six years)
* Magistr diploma (six year of study)
* The Bakalavr and Magistr diplomas are equivalent to the bachelor’s and master’s degrees.
* Post-graduate programmes:
* Aspirantura (graduate school, internship, residency etc.)
* Doctorantura (doctoral studies)

Studies offered in non-university level professional education:

A Tekhnikum usually covers humanitarian, social & natural sciences, economics & mathematics, general professional and specialised courses and practical training. The programmes for colleges, in addition to the educational programmes of the Tekhnikums, include a programme up to a one-year with theory and professional training, including in-depth practical training. Students entering after a basic general education can enter the disciplines for secondary general education.

The diploma of non-university level allows the student either to pursue a professional career according to their qualifications, or to continue to university under the same conditions as students with a certificate of upper secondary education.

The Russian government offers scholarships to students. To be eligible, the students must have the educational level equivalent to secondary education in Russia as well as pass marks not lower than 80 percent on basic courses.

Fee-paying students are responsible for their own costs and should be prepared to pay between USD 3,000 and 10,000 per annum depending on their institution and line of study.

Students may work part-time during their studies. Job opportunities are available on campus and also through employment agencies.

Interesting thing:

It is believed that the training at Harvard University can only be chosen by the elect, but this is not true: 2/3 of the students receive material support. The university takes into account the financial possibilities of each student. Harvard University is ready to take on all the expenses related to studying at a university, or to cover some of them. For example, the size of the allowance is determined as follows: the student's parents (or himself) must go to a certain amount of tuition (depending on the family's income), add to this amount investments in training (for example, from summer work and employment while studying), And also help from third-party funds. After calculating the total amount of the Harvard University Scholarship Committee (decision on the general scholarship), it is decided to assign material aid to the student.



Conclusion.

It is a universally recognized fact that a graduate of the American education system can be recruited in any company in any country in the World, whereas a graduate of a Russian university will have to prove his qualifications outside Russia or even retrain.

The main distinctive feature I consider the fact that in America they are preparing a highly specialized specialist of the highest category due to more practical applications of knowledge, while in Russia fundamental, but more general theoretical knowledge is given. Russia has one of the best mass-education systems in the world, producing a literacy rate of 98%.

I see that we should learn from foreign colleagues in terms of the organizations of the educational process, greater personal orientation, humanization of education, and American colleagues should adopt our experience of teaching the exact sciences.

Undoubtedly, American education is a world leader (according to recognized world ratings), but it seems that America does not need a mass of scientists, it is quite enough for a small percentage of geniuses and specialists of emigrants who would occupy top positions in strategically important companies and administration. While Russia gives everyone a chance to become an high-profiling mathematician or extraordinary physicist or scientific in any other field for free.





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